

December 21, 2009

Mr. Michael Jacobson
Division Director
Office of Performance Management and Strategic Planning
King County
401 Fifth Avenue, Suite 800
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Mr. Jacobson:

On behalf of AGA's Certificate of Excellence in Service Efforts and Accomplishments Reporting program, I would like to congratulate King County for the excellent *King County Aims High: Annual Indicators and Measures 2008*. We are honored to acknowledge the County's outstanding efforts and significant accomplishment by awarding the AGA's prestigious **Gold Certificate of Achievement in Service Efforts and Accomplishments Reporting**. Once again, King County has done an outstanding job meeting the Governmental Accounting Standards Board's (GASB) suggested criteria for reporting performance information.

We are particularly impressed with several innovative and noteworthy features of King County's report, including:

- Developing a well-organized framework within an interactive website that consistently tracks the performance results for each theme and program, and provides narrative and well-designed graphs to present King County's results;
- Expanding the scope of the report to cover all branches of King County's government;
- Including the *About* section, which clearly sets up the purpose and scope of the report; why it is useful to report on indicators and performance measures; the involvement of the public in this process; and a clear explanation of all changes in the report that have taken place since last year, including newly added departments and functional areas whose performance is now measured, as well as new measures and indicators;
- Including in the website for each performance measure: an explanation of why this measure is important; a description of the County's performance; an explanation of what factors influenced this result; a discussion of the role that the County plays in this service (and what role it does not institutionally play); the County's future plans and strategies for improving performance; and when applicable, a suggested sets of steps citizens can take to improve the County's performance in this area;
- Preparing a four-page performance scorecard that summarizes King County's annual performance to accompany the interactive website that provides the details of the County's performance in order to meet the varying needs of readers;
- *King County by the Numbers* side bar for each functional area, which shows key information about the County in this area and highlights significant performance results of the year;
- Providing for each measure detailed information on the sources of data, the collection frequency, and methods used to analyze data in *Technical Notes*;

- Consistently assessing performance relative to targets and over time, and in several instances benchmarking in comparison to national or statewide averages;
- Providing links for each measure to useful related local, State and national reports, websites and resources in the areas of strategic planning, indicators and measures; and,
- Welcoming user feedback on the County's website and providing the name and email address of the person to contact.

Enclosed is a Scoring Sheet that identifies the reviewers' impressions of the report in relation to the suggested criteria. It should be noted that the Program's guidelines for achieving the Gold Certificate require that at least 13 of the 17 suggested criteria be fully applied and 0 criteria be deemed as not applied. In King County's report, 14 of the criteria are fully applied and none that are not applied. This is an excellent result.

We hope you agree with us that even outstanding documents can improve and to that end we offer a few suggestions. We recommend that future reports expand the executive summary to include an analysis of internal and external challenges and make the selection of measures included in this summary more understandable and easier to find in the body of the report (Criterion 5). In addition, it would be useful to develop and report on more efficiency and cost-effectiveness measures that connect spending to performance (Criterion 9) and expand the collection and reporting of citizen and customer perceptions of King County's services (Criterion 10).

We will contact you later this year to obtain your evaluation of the performance report review program, ask for your insights about this experience and ascertain your intention to again submit King County's report to AGA for review and public recognition. Feel free to contact the SEA Program director, Evie Barry, at ebarry@agacgm.org or 703-562-0404 if you wish to discuss any aspect of the review with the Review Team Leader.

We commend the County's active engagement in this important endeavor and appreciate your valuable leadership and strong support of the program. Your demonstrated commitment to the important field of performance reporting is an example for other governments to follow. Again, we congratulate you on attaining the Gold Certificate and offer best wishes to you and your team.

Sincerely,

Relmond P. Van Daniker
Executive Director

Enclosure: Review Team Recommendations
 Scoring Sheet